

STARTOWN SMALL AREA PLAN

Background and Recommendations

In September 1999, the Board of Commissioners directed staff to begin the process of developing small area plans (SAP), as identified in the County's Strategic Growth Plan. A citizen-based committee for the Startown area, consisting of twelve members, was appointed by the Board of Commissioners in late 2003. The committee met monthly to develop a plan which addresses the following seven issues: 1) land use and community design; 2) transportation; 3) community facilities and public services; 4) housing; 5) economic development; 6) natural resources; and 7) cultural resources.

In order to obtain input on these issues, the committee sponsored a community meeting in May 2004. Forty (40) citizens attended this meeting held at the Startown Elementary School. The main issues presented at this meeting included balancing pressures for commercial development with rural qualities, fear of annexation and the concern over expansion of highways.

Following are highlights of the Startown Small Area Plan:

- Extensive residential rezonings – the committee is recommending the rezoning of all the residential-zoned property within their district. Approximately 25% of the land is proposed to be rezoned to R-1 which would not allow any type of manufactured home. Around 64% is proposed to be rezoned to R-3, which allows for doublewide manufactured homes and stick-built homes (no singlewide manufactured homes.) The basis for the recommendation is the changing trend of residential development in the area and the protection of property values, appearance and character of the high-density area.
- High residential density is recommended north of Hwy. 10 and east of a corridor along Startown Road between Newton and Maiden. High density would allow two houses per acre without public water and three houses per acre with public water. In order to preserve the rural character of the area between Newton and Maiden, mandatory clustering is recommended for all major subdivisions on Startown Road south of Hwy. 10, Sigmon Dairy Road and Rome Jones Road. Mandatory clustering is also recommended for major subdivisions on Startown Road north of Settlemyre Bridge Road. Also, to further protect the rural character, the plan recommends that all homes be setback 100 feet from Startown Road (north of Settlemyre Bridge Road and south of Hwy. 10), Sigmon Dairy Road and Rome Jones Road.
- Low residential density is proposed for the area south of Hwy. 10 and west of a corridor on Startown Road. Low residential density is defined as one home per two acres. The plan also recommends that new homes along Blackburn Bridge Road and Hickory-Lincolnton Hwy. be setback 100 feet.
- Commercial uses would be allowed in the "Community Center" at a recommended Hwy. 321 interchange at Rocky Ford Road in addition to the neighborhood and rural commercial nodes. A neighborhood node is recommended for the intersection of Settlemyre Bridge Road and Startown Road (future intersection of Southern Corridor). A rural node is recommended at the intersection of Hwy. 10 and Hickory-Lincolnton Hwy. Commercial development standards include: landscaping along road frontage and within parking lots, allowance for mixed-use developments (commercial with residential uses in the same building), encouraging the use of native plants for landscaping and brick or masonry building fronts.
- Mixed-use development is recommended in a proposed village area at the northern end of the district on the west side of Startown Road. A mixture of commercial, office, multi-family and single-family uses would be allowed in the village.
- The plan recommends that future phases of Catawba Valley Blvd. east of Startown Road not be built due to concerns over the potential for increased commercial

development in the northern portion of the small area plan district. The committee also believes that an additional east-west road was not needed between I-40 and Settlemyre Bridge Road.

- The plan recommends that a new interchange at Hwy. 321 and Rocky Ford Road be constructed to accommodate industrial traffic to the landfill and other industrial uses off Rocky Ford Road.
- The plan encourages working with landowners and land trusts to develop passive recreational opportunities, such as boating access areas, on the South Fork Catawba River (including the Henry and Jacobs Fork Rivers).
- The plan encourages exploring adaptive reuse of the Blackburn Landfill site for joint economic and education opportunities, such as a site for CVCC's turf management program.
- The plan recommends exploring cooperative ways to partner with the City of Newton on the development of its Jacob Fork Park.

Note: The recommendations, in their entirety, are included in a second handout. Maps referenced in the handout are available for viewing on the County's web site or at the Planning Department.

The draft plan was then presented to the public at a community meeting held in May 2005. The committee reviewed comments received from this meeting and made some minor amendments to the plan. These changes included requiring cluster subdivisions and 100 foot setback for residential development along Startown Road north of Settlemyre Bridge Road, a minor revision to the rezoning map along Hwy. 321 Business and exploring cooperative ways to partner with the City of Newton on the development of the City's new Jacob Fork Park.

In August 2005, the committee Chair met with the Board of Commissioners in one-on-one meetings to review the plan recommendations in detail. These comments were reviewed by the committee at its August 30, 2005 meeting. The Committee considered the Board's comments but did not make any changes as suggested by the Board due to the initial input received by the community. With discussion of the Board of Commissioners recommendations and other issues presented by the City of Newton, the committee recommended the Startown Small Area Plan at its August 30, 2005 meeting. In voting on the plan, Glenn Pattishall (Planning Director and committee representative for the City of Newton) expressed the City's opposition to the recommendation of deletion of the Catawba Valley Blvd. Extension road project from the Thoroughfare Plan. Also, Mr. Pattishall along with Andrea Lytle (Planner representing the Town of Maiden) noted their opposition to the deletion of the Robinson Road Extension project.

On September 6, 2005, the Startown committee met jointly with the Planning Board in a work session to review the plan recommendations in detail. A minor amendment was made to the residential rezoning map to include property along Rocky Ford Road in the proposed R-1 rezoning area.

The Planning Board conducted its public hearing on the plan at its September 26, 2005 meeting. The Board recommended the plan as submitted by the Startown committee, which included the recommendation of deletion of the Catawba Valley Blvd. and Robinson Rd. Ext. projects.

The Board of Commissioners will conduct its public hearing on October 17, 2005 and accept your comments on the plan. Upon receiving public comments, the Board may decide to adopt the plan as presented, adopt an amended plan or request additional information prior to adoption.

Should you have any questions regarding the Startown Small Area Plan, you may contact Mary K. George, County Planner, at (828) 465-8264.